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ABSTRACT

This study investigated quantitative differences in commitment between three age groups of children toward eight societal components: self, home, neighborhood, school, religion, voluntary membership organization, state, and country. Participating in the study were 469 school-age students in 18 randomly selected classrooms in six randomly selected school districts in southeast Texas. The sample had 169 fifth-grade students, 159 eighth-grade students, and 141 eleventh-grade students. Each student filled out a values questionnaire. Findings include the following. For values toward self, religious organization, voluntary membership organization, state, and country, there were significant differences in expressed values toward societal components between age groups. In every instance of a significant difference, the eighth-grade students scored lowest. This was not surprising since the early adolescent years are known to be a time of emotional turmoil, insecurity, and adjustment. From a quantitative point of view, the values toward these components were as high at the fifth-grade level as they could be expected to be during most of the remainder of the public school career. Values were not arranged in a linearly upward sequence, with older students expressing higher values than the younger. Much of the affective makeup of the individual appears to have been learned by the time he is in the fifth grade. It appears, then, that schools should expend considerable effort in nurturing values toward these components in the formative years of their students. (Author/RM)

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DIFFERENCES IN COMMITMENT TO SOCIETAL COMPONENTS BETWEEN THREE AGE GROUPS

by

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October 5, 1981

A. INTRODUCTION

The quantitative and qualitative differences of different age groups of children and adolescents with regards to moral maturity and patriotism have received much attention. Dewey (1), Piaget (2), and Kohlberg (3) have proposed cognitive developmental theories of moral development in an attempt to explain some of the qualitative diversity of values held by young people toward different segments of society. These theories have postulated that the qualitative aspects of moral development are natural, sequential, invariant, and multi-ethnic. Moral development is said to progress in stages from a punishment-obedience orientation to a universal ethical principle orientation. The transition from one stage to another is believed by some to be facilitated by exposure to moral dilemmas which require moral thinking at the next higher level. The moral reasoning of older subjects is depicted by cognitive-developmentalists as being qualitatively higher than that of younger subjects. The quality of moral reasoning used by an individual is directly related to the affect that individual may experience toward a person, institution, or organization, in that

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he must ask himself if he is behaving in a morally correct way toward those entities.

B. METHOD

The thrust of this study was to investigate quantitative rather than qualitative differences in commitment between three age groups toward eight societal components: self, home, neighborhood, school, religion, voluntary membership organization, state, and country. A values questionnaire was designed and carefully validated for use in collecting data. There were five questions in Likert format which solicited the student's opinion about his own feelings toward each of the above named eight societal components. The scoring for the responses was from a one to a possible five for each question. Since there were five items in each subscale, which measured values toward each of the eight components, and a possible score of five on each item, a respondent who felt very favorable toward a particular component could score twenty-five. If a respondent marked every response three for neutral, the subscale score for that component was fifteen. The lowest quantity of commitment that could be reported for a component was five. The split-half reliability for the total quesionnaire was .9594. The split half reliabilities for each of the subscales is shown in Table I. The instrument, before it was utilized in this study, underwent scrutiny by a panel of university-level social studies educators for content validity.

TABLE I

SPLIT-HALF RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS FOR EIGHT SUBSCALES OF A VALUES QUESTIONNAIRE

Societal Component	Split-Half Reliability
Self value	.8302
Home value	.8729
Neighborhood Value	.8769
Religious Organization Value	.9011
School Value	.8516
Voluntary Membership Organization Value	.9119
State Value	.8453
Country Value	.8789
Total Questionnaire	.9594

*significant at or beyond .05 level.

Evincing the above levels of internal consistency, the instrument was utilized for measuring the values of a carefully selected sample.

Four hundred and sixty-nine schoolage students in eighteen randomly selected classrooms in six randomly selected school districts in southeast Texas participated in the study. The sample had 169 fifth grade students, 159 eighth grade students, and 141 eleventh grade students. The questionnaire was administered under carefully controlled conditions to insure uniformity.

C. RESULTS

The null hypothesis that was tested stated "There will be no significant (p .05) difference in reported values toward the eight

societal components between age groups". The results of the analysis of variance and Duncan's (4) multiple range test for each societal component are shown in Table 2.

It was first of all apparent that the mean responses of all three age groups to all eight societal components was higher than that of neutrality. A mean score of fifteen would have indicated that the expressed value toward a component was neither favorable nor unfavorable. The highest expressed values overall were those toward state (Texas) and country, which from the social studies educator's point of view was refreshing news indeed. In testing the hypothesis of no difference in values between age groups, it was noted that for five societal components, there were significant F's. For values toward self, religious organizations, voluntary membership organizations, state, and country, there were significant differences in expressed values toward societal components between age groups. In every instance of a significant difference, the eighth grade students scored lowest.

D. DISCUSSION

Several things are apparent from these findings. First of all, from a quantitative point of view, it appears that values toward these components were as high at the fifth grade level as they could be expected to be during most of the remainder of the public school career. At the eighth grade level, in regard to the five statistically significant differences, there appears to have been a values slump. The early adolescent years are known to be a time of emotional turmoil, insecurity, and adjustment. For value toward religious organizations,

the decline after the fifth grade appears to have continued through the eighth and also the eleventh grades. For the other four significant differences, values toward societal components returned to the fifth grade levels by the eleventh grade.

E. CONCLUSIONS

It was not the purpose of the study to agree or differ with the findings of Kohlberg et.al. Rather, this study investigated the quantitative aspects of value formation between age groups. It is possible that the different age groups valued the societal components the way in which they reported they did for qualitatively different reasons. But the present investigation did note that values were not arranged in a linearly upward sequence, with older students expressing higher values than the younger. Much of the affective makeup of the individual appears to have been learned by the time he is in the fifth grade. It appears, then, that schools should expend considerable effort in nurturing values toward these components in the formative years of their students.

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2. Piaget, J. The Moral Judgment of the Child. New York: Free Press, 1948. Pp. 24-50.

3. Kohlberg, L. The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Moral Education. Phi Delta Kappan, 1975, 56. Pp. 607-677.

4. Duncan, D. Multiple Range and F tests. Biometrics, 1955, 11. Pp. 1-42.

TABLE 2

Means and F-values Resulting From the Analysis of Variance Calculated for Three Age Groups for Eight Societal Components and Duncan's Multiple Range Test of Homogeneity

Societal Components	Self Value	Home Value	Nbrhd. Value	Rel.Org. Value	School Value	V.M.O. Value	State Value	Country Value
Grade								
Fifth N=169	18.01(A)+	21.10(A)	18.78(A)	20.76(A)	17.70(A)	17.07(AB)	20.70(A)	21.42(A)
Eighth N=159	17.01(B)	20.20(A)	18.13(A)	18.95(B)	17.57(A)	16.04(B)	19.27(B)	20.03(B)
Eleventh N=141	18.42(A)	20.30(A)	17.92(A)	18.96(B)	17.43(A)	17.63(A)	20.45(A)	20.67(AB)
F-value	5.58*	1.76	1.51	7.30*	0.12	3.03*	3.70*	3.88*
-Square	.02	.01	.01	.03	.01	.01	.02	.02

*Significant at or beyond .05 level.

+Alphabetical characters illustrate groupings. For self value, fifth and eleventh grade students' scores were not significantly different from each other, but eighth grade students scored significantly (p .05) lower than either the fifth grade students or the eleventh grade students.

Instructions: Do Not Mark On This Booklet. Wait for instructions. All answers will be marked on the answer sheets.

1. I am in the _____ grade.

   A. Fifth
   B. Eighth
   C. Eleventh

2. I have _____ brothers older than me.

   A. 0
   B. 1
   C. 2
   D. 3
   E. 4 or more

3. I have _____ brothers younger than me.

   A. 0
   B. 1
   C. 2
   D. 3
   E. 4 or more

4. I have _____ sisters older than me.

   A. 0
   B. 1
   C. 2
   D. 3
   E. 4 or more

5. I have _____ sisters younger than me.

   A. 0
   B. 1
   C. 2
   D. 3
   E. 4 or more

6. Are you living with your mother?

   A. Yes B. No

7. Are you living with a stepmother?

   A. Yes B. No

8. Are you living with your father?

   A. Yes B. No

9. Are you living with a stepfather?

   A. Yes B. No

10. I am _____.

   A. Male
   B. Female

11. My father was in the Army or Navy or Air Force or Marines or Coast Guard for about _____ year(s).

   A. Less than 1 or not at all
   B. 1-3
   C. 3-5
   D. 5-10
   E. More than 10

12. My mother served in the armed forces for about _____ years.

   A. Less than 1 or not at all
   B. 1-3
   C. 3-5
   D. 5-10
   E. More than 10

13. My father is _____ years old.

   A. 20-25
   B. 26-30
   C. 31-35
   D. 36-40
   E. More than 40

14. My mother is _____ years old.

   A. 20-25
   B. 26-30
   C. 31-35
   D. 36-40
   E. More than 40

15. My father, in my judgment, in his line of work best fits the _____ group.

A. Blue collar (construction worker, rancher, carpenter, mechanic, etc.)
B. Service personnel (mailman, air traffic controller, salesman, etc.)
C. White collar (teacher, bank officer, store manager)
D. Professional (doctor, lawyer, judge)
E. Agriculture worker

16. My mother, in my judgment, in her line of work best fits the _____ group.

A. Housewife
B. Blue collar worker (factory worker, bakery, waitress)
C. Service worker (telephone operator, nurse, computer programmer)
D. White collar worker (teacher, bank officer, accountant)
E. Professional (doctor, lawyer, judge)

17. My father has worked at his present firm or present job for _____ year(s).

A. Less than one or doesn't work
B. 1-3
C. 3-5
D. 5-10
E. More than 10

18. My mother has worked at her present job for _____ year(s).

A. Less than one or doesn't work
B. 1-3
C. 3-5
D. 5-10
E. More than 10

19. I have lived in my present neighborhood

A. Less than 6 months
B. 6 months to a year
C. 1 year to 3 years
D. 3 years to 10 years
E. More than 10 years

20. I have been going to this school for

A. Less than a year
B. 1 to 2 years
C. 2 to 3 years
D. 3 to 4 years
E. More than 4 years

21. I have been worshipping with people of the same church or synagogue that I now worship with for

A. Less than a year, or not at all
B. 1 to 2 years
C. 2 to 3 years
D. 3 to 4 years
E. More than 4 years

22. A voluntary membership group is one that you join just because you want to. Some examples of voluntary membership groups are: Campfire girls, American Legion, Boy Scouts, 4-H, Girl Scouts, Young Democrats. Do you belong to a voluntary membership group?

A. Yes B. No

23. I have been a member of my favorite voluntary membership organization for about

A. Less than 1 year, or am not a member of any such group
B. 1 to 3 years
C. 3 to 5 years
D. 5 to 10 years
E. More than 10 years

24. I have lived in Texas for

A. Less than 1 year
B. 1 to 3 years
C. 3 to 5 years
D. 5 to 10 years
E. More than 10 years

Directions: In the questions numbered 25 to 72, mark A, if you strongly disagree with the statement; B, if you disagree somewhat; C, if you neither agree nor disagree; D, if you agree somewhat; and E, if you strongly agree with the statement.

25. I have had some experiences that have made me a better person.	A	B	C	D	E
26. Almost everyone finds something nice about me.	A	B	C	D	E
27. The people I want to like me are the ones that do like me.	A	B	C	D	E
28. I know how to do things for myself better than most of my friends.	A	B	C	D	E

29.	I like what I see when I look in the mirror.	A	B	C	D	E
30.	I feel that the things I do are good for me.	A	B	C	D	E
31.	I have a good feeling when I think about my family.	A	B	C	D	E
32.	My family is well liked by others.	A	B	C	D	E
33.	I look forward to going home.	A	B	C	D	E
34.	Most of my relatives respect my family.	A	B	C	D	E
35.	Members of my family are in close contact with each other.	A	B	C	D	E
36.	I feel that I am a worthy contributor to my home.	A	B	C	D	E
37.	In a good way, my neighborhood is a special place.	A	B	C	D	E
38.	It would be all right with me to spend the rest of my life in my neighborhood.	A	B	C	D	E
39.	I enjoy doing things in my neighborhood.	A	B	C	D	E
40.	There are really fine people in my neighborhood.	A	B	C	D	E
41.	Others would think I live in a good neighborhood.	A	B	C	D	E
42.	I feel that I am a worthy contributor to my community.	A	B	C	D	E
43.	Our school has a good school spirit.	A	B	C	D	E
44.	Most students that attend my school like it.	A	B	C	D	E
45.	I am proud to tell people where I go to school.	A	B	C	D	E
46.	At our school, we get things done.	A	B	C	D	E
47.	How sad I'll be when I am finished at my school and can't go back.	A	B	C	D	E

48.	I feel that I am a worthy contributor to my school.	A	B	C	D	E
49.	Going to church/synagogue makes me feel good inside.	A	B	C	D	E
50.	I try to live my daily life in a way that I was told to do in church.	A	B	C	D	E
51.	Being at church makes me feel good.	A	B	C	D	E
52.	I am proud to tell others about my church.	A	B	C	D	E
53.	If I ever move away, I will want to find another church just like the one I now have.	A	B	C	D	E
54.	I feel that I am a worthy contributor to my church or synagogue.	A	B	C	D	E
55.	I am proud to tell others about my voluntary membership organization.	A	B	C	D	E
56.	It is important for a person to belong to such things as voluntary membership organizations.	A	B	C	D	E
57.	My voluntary membership organization does much to help its members.	A	B	C	D	E
58.	My voluntary membership organization does much to help those who are not members.	A	B	C	D	E
59.	I hope to become an officer in my voluntary membership organization.	A	B	C	D	E
60.	I feel that I am a worthy contributor to my voluntary membership organization.	A	B	C	D	E
61.	Texas is the best state in the Union.	A	B	C	D	E
62.	I like this song: Texas our Texas.	A	B	C	D	E
63.	Texas history is rich and colorful.	A	B	C	D	E
64.	I hope that I will never have to move away from Texas.	A	B	C	D	E
65.	It makes me proud to think of myself as a Texan.	A	B	C	D	E

66. I feel that I am a worthy contributor to my state. A B C D E

67. Being an American, I feel proud in just seeing the colors red, white, and blue. A B C D E

68. I enjoyed our country's Bicentennial celebration. A B C D E

69. Our country is truly the land of the free and the home of the brave. A B C D E

70. I cherish my citizenship and would never want to relinquish it. A B C D E

71. I like to think I feel about my country much in the same way as did George Washington, Patrick Henry, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Nathan Hale. A B C D E

72. I feel that I am a worthy contributor to my country. A B C D E

73. I _____ a citizen of the United States.

A. am B. am not

74. I feel the way I do about myself because

A. my parents, teachers, and other adults seem to feel the same way about themselves.
B. it is rewarding to me to feel that way.
C. the facts available to me clearly say that is how I should feel.
D. of some other reason besides these listed here.

75. I feel the way I do about my family because

A. my parents show the same feeling about my family.
B. it is rewarding to me to feel that way.
C. the facts available to me clearly say that is how I should feel.
D. of some other reason besides these listed here.

76. I feel the way I do about my neighborhood because

A. my parents, teachers, and other adults seem to feel the same way about my neighborhood.
B. it is rewarding to me to feel that way.
C. the facts available to me clearly say that is how I should feel.
D. of some other reason besides these listed here.

77. I feel the way I do about my school because

A. my parents, teachers, and other adults seem to feel the same way about my school.
B. it is rewarding to me to feel that way.
C. the facts available to me clearly say that is how I should feel.
D. of some other reason besides these listed here.

78. I feel the way I do about the religious organization which I attend or am a member because

A. my parents, teachers, and other adults seem to feel the same way about my religion.
B. it is rewarding to me to feel that way.
C. the facts available to me clearly say that is how I should feel.
D. of some other reason besides these listed here.

79. I feel the way I do about my favorite voluntary membership group because

A. my parents, teachers, and other adults seem to feel the same way about my voluntary membership group.
B. it is rewarding to me to feel that way.
C. the facts available to me clearly say that is how I should feel.
D. of some other reason besides these listed here.

80. I feel the way I do about Texas because

A. my parents, teachers, and other adults seem to feel the same way about Texas.
B. it is rewarding to me to feel that way.
C. the facts available to me clearly say that is how I should feel.
D. of some other reason besides these listed here.

81. I feel the way I do about being an American because

A. my parents, teachers, and other adults seem to feel the same way about being an American.
B. it is rewarding to me to feel that way.
C. the facts available to me clearly say that is how I should feel.
D. of some other reason besides these listed here.

82. I am a/an

A. Black-American
B. Mexican-American
C. Anglo-American
D. Indian-American
E. Another racial background

83. I am in _____ voluntary membership group(s).

A. 0
B. 1
C. 2
D. 3
E. 4 or more

84. My father completed this amount of education (select the highest one that applies).

A. Junior high school
B. High school
C. Some college
D. Bachelor's degree
E. Graduate degree

85. My mother completed this amount of education (select the highest one that applies).

A. Junior high school
B. High school
C. Some college
D. Bachelor's degree
E. Graduate degree